

## Atrocities Made to Order

WILFRID PARSONS, S.J.

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SOMETIMES I believe that the most gullible people in the world are the men who work on newspapers. They actually believe what they read in their columns. In this they stand now almost alone; in this country, at least. They were among those who believed that Roosevelt was going to be defeated last November, and seemingly the only reason they had for that bizarre notion was that the newspapers said so. Only Maine and Vermont came through. This also stunned the editorial writers, for it proved that the majority of people pay not the slightest attention to their opinions.

Take superstition, for instance. Who, outside of newspaper writers, believes that Friday the Thirteenth has the smallest influence on the result, say, of a baseball game? Yet every time that combination of dates comes around we are filled up with fears that our favorite pitcher will fall the victim of that sinister omen. When he wins, the writers blithely transfer the result to his opponent; it was Friday the Thirteenth did it. You would think that after all these years they would reflect that unless the game is a tie, that day, like any other day, is just as fortunate to one side as it is ill-omened to the other. Yet on every Saturday the Fourteenth, all the losers are victims of the Thirteenth; but the winners are not its gainers, for that would spoil the childish game. Every disaster that day had its origin in the same way in the other sections of the paper.

And Ground Hog Day. Will somebody please soon start a Society for the Suppression of Ground Hog Day? Once, no doubt, it was quaint conceit, borrowed from the Pennsylvania Dutch farmers, that if the sun shone on February 2 we would have forty more days of winter. Nobody believes it, of course, except newspaper writers, and the rest of us are tired of it.

One of the sacred beliefs of all newspaper men is that the blood disease from which the sons of the ex-King of Spain suffer—hemophilia—is an inheritance from the Bourbons. This comes up every time one of Alfonso's sons gets in trouble. It is solemnly related as if it were some secret disgrace, and proved the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race, or something or other. Now I have no particular love for the Bourbons; in fact I have a special personal grudge against them, which is neither here nor there. It was the Bourbons who had the Society of Jesus suppressed in the eighteenth century. But the known medical fact is that hemophilia is inherited not from the father, but from the mother. And the mother of Alfonso's sons is an Englishwoman, a great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria. The dread disease is on her side of the family, not Alfonso's. The little son of the late Czar got his the same way, not from the Romanoffs. Everybody knows that fact, except newspaper writers.

About a month ago, my local paper carried a very sensational story about some secret document involving Mussolini in some, I forget what, dire intrigue. (Everybody else forgot it, too, promptly.) It was by Jay Allen, and my local editor prefixed to it the statement that Jay Allen had many great "scoops" to his credit, including the terrible "massacre in the bull-ring at Badajoz." This massacre in the bull-ring, in case you have forgotten it, was supposed to have been perpetrated by the anti-Reds under Franco in Spain when they drove the Reds out of that strategic center.

Now, Jay Allen sent that story from Portugal, not from Badajoz, and he could not possibly have known the facts about that occupied town. He got it from a publicity man from the Reds, who was just as far out of it. It was a scoop which I imagine Jay Allen is willing to forget, just as the public has forgotten his Mussolini documents. *Time* magazine, a week or two after, carried a complete expose of the story, from eyewitness French reporters. And Francis McCullagh, the greatest war correspondent of them all, was on the spot as the Nationalists entered Badajoz, and when he learned what Jay Allen had cabled from Portugal he replied to it with great heat and indignation in the English press, denouncing the whole thing as a fake.

The Pope's health has also been a field day prolonged. Every time we opened the paper we had circumstantial

stories about the imminence of his death. The Rome correspondent of the Catholic papers here kept denying them as fast as they came. And in fact, except for a couple of weeks in bed, no uncommon thing for an old man of eighty who will work fourteen hours a day, he kept on receiving large crowds of visitors, making speeches, writing Encyclicals, all of which were duly reported in other columns of the newspapers. Only a day or so before I wrote this, the papers came out with a story that he had fainted and had been unconscious for twenty minutes, and a gullible radio announcer picked it up and duly embroidered it according to the fashion of his kind. Unfortunately for them, a few hours later came the news that the Pope had taken a ninety-minute ride in his automobile, that he had received two large pilgrimages, and blessed about seventy newly married couples, all when he was supposed to be unconscious. So the fainting story was quickly killed.

Mr. Patrick F. Scanlan, editor of the Brooklyn *Tablet*, spotted a "beauty" the other day. The Associated Press sent to its members a photograph, said to be from Bilbao, of a procession headed by priests making its way to church to pray for deliverance from the wicked Franco. The idea, of course, was to show that the Church was on the side of the Basques and Anarchists. But Mr. Scanlan's eagle eye descried a hearse in the picture. Now what was a hearse doing there? His memory began to work, and he set his office force digging into the files. In a few minutes it came up with the very same picture, published in the American press three months before, of a funeral procession in Spain carrying some dead hero to his grave.

What about all these pictures from Spain? Not so long ago, the papers carried a series of horror pictures, depicting, so we were told, the mangled corpses of women and children who were victims of Franco's bombings. But the pictures also appeared in France, and there somebody's memory recalled that they were merely a set of propaganda poses, that they dated from the World War, and were made to convince the world of German barbarity. Do you see what I mean when I say newspaper men are the most gullible of mortals?

It is well to remember that a photo does not always carry its own identification on its face. Some years ago, a clerical friend of mine was interested in the case of a lady,

whose husband, said she, had died in South Africa, and who wanted to remarry. She was asked by the authorities to show proof of his death. For answer she produced a photo of a gravestone marked with her husband's name. The hard-headed authorities, however, pointed out that there was no proof (1) that the grave was in South Africa; (2) that it was her husband's tombstone, and (3) even if it were that he was beneath it. (P. S.—She did not get permission to remarry.)

Dozens of these propaganda pictures are in the same case. How do we know that they are from Spain? If the camera man has any brains, and is honest, he takes care to have some Spanish sign in the background, so as to give it local color at least, and some plausibility. Sometimes that is not possible; but when it finally dawns on editors that their readers are not so gullible as they, maybe they will just quietly drop an un-self-identifiable picture into the waste basket and forget all about it.

The other day I was reading a dispatch from over the border in France. Why I was doing this I do not know, for it is an axiom that over-the-border stories are the least reliable of stories (like Jay Allen's massacre). Every Communist will instruct you what to believe about stories on Russia from Riga. But I was reading it. To my amazement I saw these words (the writer was speaking about a place called Guernica): "... since the burning of Irun and San Sebastian by the rebels." I grew dizzy. Even the newspapers told who burnt and blew up Irun. It was the Anarchists who destroyed it as they retreated from it, to the great indignation of the Basques, who put many of them to death for doing it. Every paper carried this. As for San Sebastian, all the papers carried the sensational story that it was not burnt at all, that the Basques retreated from it and left it unhurt, to the great indignation of the Anarchists, who believe that the only good city is a burnt one. Wouldn't you expect that somebody in an editorial chair or on the copy desk would have some shreds of memory, at least about the more important events of the past few months? Any high school boy in a current events test could have set him right. But then the boy is not being paid to remember.

In May, *America* quoted from the London *Tablet* a story

very much to the point. Up to April 19, the Valencia Government had claimed to have won 1,500,000 square kilometers, three times the whole area of Spain; to have killed or wounded 2,500,000 of its enemies; to have captured 345,000 prisoners; to have taken 415,000 cannon, 775,000 machine guns; to have shot down 56,779 airplanes, Huesca was captured twenty-six times; Toledo eleven; Oviedo twenty-two times. Our news associations dutifully carry all these sensational details; the newspapers thankfully accept them, set them up, and write lurid headlines for them, day after day.

One of the biggest hoaxes was the one about the democracy of the Government in Spain. I dealt with that one last August in a piece in *Columbia* called "No Masses in Madrid." But though that piece, I believe, got more publicity than anything I ever wrote, I regret to report that the hoax still goes on. It was reprinted with both (a) approval and (b) disapproval by (a) Catholic and (b) Communist papers at different times for months. But the Valencia Government is still democratic, for the newspapers. It is democratic because the newspapers will have it democratic, not because it is. If the editors read their own papers they would know that it is not democratic. Not by any stretch could Largo Caballero, long the head of the Valencia junta, be called democratic. He would punch your nose if you called him that. He hates democracy, and has many times said so. And now he is out and his place is taken by Communists, and the bitter damnations of democracy that have been written by Communists would fill two libraries. Yet for the American press Valencia goes right on being democratic. That is the height of conservatism or something. Stupidity, more like. For you do not have to do anything more than read the newspapers' own dispatches to know that there is no more democracy in Valencia than in Russia. But now Russia is being set before us by conservative papers as very democratic, so I suppose I should know better.

Come to think of it, I haven't read for about two weeks that Franco's armies are composed mostly of Moors from Africa. Remember them? They were on every battlefield, on every mountain, in every city. If all the Moors in Africa had come over they would not be enough to fill the require-

ments of the stories we heard about them. They must all be dead, or gone back to Africa. Their place has been taken by Italian and Germans. Get the point? Propaganda has taken the place of truth.

Which reminds me of another of Mr. Scanlan's countless precious finds. One day the New York *Herald Tribune* had a story which it headlined: "Women Slain in Street As German-made Planes Strafe Bilbao." The very same day, the New York *Times*, writing about the very same front, had this: "Rebels Push Ahead in Drive on Bilbao; Rain Halts Planes." Draw your own conclusions. Some other day the position of the two papers will be reversed.

I could keep up this expose all day and fill many pages of *Columbia* with it. In Philadelphia they have got out an eight-page pamphlet called "The Philadelphia *Record* Weeps for Catholic Martyrs." The town of Guernica was destroyed by Franco's planes or by retreating Anarchists, the truth had not yet come out. But the *Record* promptly published an editorial captioned: "Catholic Martyrs to a New Barbarism." The Catholics were the Basques; the barbarians were Franco's. Whereupon the pamphlet asks Mr. J. David Stern, of the *Record*, where he was when 140,000 Catholics were massacred by the Reds. Any tears then? Not a tear. But then those massacres were perpetrated by Largo Caballero's democrats, and that is different.

As for Guernica, it bids fair to take its place as the greatest propaganda hoax (after Badajoz) in the whole merry game of misleading the public. The Basques evacuated it, because of a strategic move of Franco's armies. When General Mola moved in, he found it in ruins. Those are the facts. The next day the whole world press flared out with the lurid story that Hitler's planes had bombed it flat and killed nobody knew how many women and children (never any men). The world apparently believed and Foreign Secretary Eden made a speech in the House of Commons about it. It was certainly exploited to the limit, and perhaps many of Franco's sympathizers still sorrowfully believe that he ordered it.

But another group of foreign newspaper men came in with Franco. What did they find? That Guernica was not blown down, it was blown up. The very same dynamiting Anarchists who had destroyed Irun had planted mines in

the houses and streets, as you might expect, and after soaking the houses with gasoline had set the mines off and departed. This was vouched for by many neutral eyewitnesses. Did the newspapers accept the truth? Not noticeably. Guernica is still an atrocity, like Badajoz.

An international committee, led by England and France, is set up to see that nobody imports any arms into Spain for either side (not on the French border, however). Italy and Germany are invited in, as a guarantee of good faith, so that they may see that nobody gets any arms in to help Valencia. Well, a German battleship is anchored quietly in a harbor off the coast of Spain, and two Loyalist planes come along and drop several bombs on the easy mark. Twenty-six German sailors reclining below decks forward are wiped out, and twenty more are wounded. Any tears? Not a tear. Then the Deutschland's sister ship goes to Almeria and throws a few shots into the fortifications, and maybe into the town; how damaging they were we do not know. (You remember England's bombardment of Alexandria, ours of Vera Cruz? Or is that tactless?) So Senator Borah blows up, and all the other pseudo-liberals sing a song together, and the burden of it is that Germany has been guilty of an unjustified aggression, and must be punished. (Incidentally, this is what I meant in an earlier article in *Columbia*, when I said that the real war party in this country are the Russian sympathizers.)

Now my guess is that the bombing planes were Russian, not Spanish; and that they did what they did under orders from Moscow; for anybody who knows anything about European affairs knows that only Russia can possibly profit from a war in Europe today, and that all of England's and France's ingenuity has been exercised to the utmost to keep her from precipitating a fight. This is confirmed by a very pious dispatch in the *New York Times* from one of Stalin's stooges in Moscow bemoaning the barbarity of Germany and (this let the cat out of the bag) devoutly hoping that England and France will not take this new "insult" lying down, as they so often have done, but would promptly punish Germany severely (that is, make war on her). Do these people think that we are so utterly stupid as not to see through that? But why not? Haven't we fallen for the same thing often before?

Finally, just the day I am writing this, the New York *Times* comes out with a defense of the press. It seems that M. Chastenet, editor of the great French paper *Le Temps*, had issued a warning to Americans against the news from Europe, "which is flooded with propaganda." What does the *Times* say to that? "Not all the reports and denials, charges and counter-charges, that come every hour out of Spain are the work of propaganda." That is priceless. *Not all* of it is propaganda. Thanks for that. It would take only one dispatch that is not propaganda to make that true, leaving all the rest not news, but propaganda. And how are we to know which one that is? Will the *Times* label it for us? *Not all* is propaganda. And can it blame us if we reply that therefore *everything* is marked with the suspicion of it? *Not all is propaganda*. Oh, my, my!

But here is the rub. It does not take any great acumen or intelligence to discover the facts I have set forth above. Yet hundreds of our very best minds have seemingly been unable to do it. Divinity school professors, conventions of rabbis, Methodist bishops, best-seller writers, medical men, respectable ministers, newspaper editors, oh, all the best people, piously read their morning paper and believe everything they read—provided it is against Franco and the Nationalists. They sign manifestos at the bidding of Communist-inspired united fronts; they sit on platforms with assorted queer priests from Spain, France, and Ireland, and nod their heads solemnly at the outpourings of Communist hirelings against the Catholic Church.

I have a letter from a friend of mine in which he asks these pertinent questions: "Will you tell us why all these people are heavily on the 'Loyalist' side? Who is giving them the ether and why do they take it without a struggle? Why should these people and the news services favor the side on which the Communists pull such a heavy oar? What community of interest have they with Stalin's crew? How, for instance, does the machinery in the head of Bishop Mc-Connell operate? Does he really *believe* the 'Spanish democracy' gag?"

I would not be surprised if he did believe it. For all I know, he may believe everything he reads in the papers. But here is the point. When a man is faced with a question with two sides to it, with arguments strong on each side, he



cannot make up his mind on that question unless he *wants* to do it. He must deliberately choose; and that needs an act of the will. But the will, unless it has trained itself to follow reason and not feeling, will always make itself up on the side on which its feelings are enlisted.

In a case like Spain, therefore, these men simply close their eyes and minds to everything on the other side, and *can't see* it. For months it has been dinned into their ears that Valencia is democratic and that Franco is a Fascist. That side has been heavily emphasized and the other soft-pedaled by very clever propaganda. That gives their minds an excuse. After that, the wild and ridiculous self-contradictions that have characterized the Valencia side of the propaganda conflict simply do not register with them. (The papers have not carried enough from the Franco side to make a respectable self-contradiction.) If *you* have chosen the other side, as they have chosen the Communist side, then you are a Fascist and not worthy to be heard.

So much for the way their mind works. It is under the control of their wills, which is under the control of their feelings. In such a state, a man's logic and common sense have very little chance to operate. He is reduced to a strictly non-rational animal.

So the rub comes with their feelings. Where are they enlisted? With the murder of priests, the rape of nuns, the burning of churches? Not at all—consciously; they are *blind* to that, I tell you. If these things took place against the side their feelings are with, they would see them quickly enough. Where are their feelings, then? Let me ask another question. Did you ever hear of any of these so-called liberals condemning aggression against the Catholic Church and Catholics in Mexico, or any other place where there has been any? Not among the pseudo-liberals, you haven't. You scratch any of these gentry and right under the skin you will find a Church-hater. He may have rationalized it into hatred of the supposed enmity of the Church for freedom and democracy. But the feeling is anti-Church, anti-religious. Anything that promises to put the Church down is the thing for them. It works infallibly, though often unconsciously.

Here is one more question, and I leave the subject. The New York Times hates Hitler. That is on the order of one-

plus-one-makes-two. Then why does the *Times* devote such a disproportionate amount of space to describing in minute detail the so-called "morality trials" in Germany against priests and religious? My *Times* today has nearly three columns on one of these; along with the cheerful news that the trials will last for years. It admits that Hitler's purpose in them is propaganda, to discredit the Church. Then why does the *Times* play Hitler's game for him? Because it is news? Nonsense. That gag is worked out. The *Times* has played down thousands of stories in its day. And besides, two sticks would satisfy the news value of this oft-repeated story. Believe me, the constant and lengthy repetition of the trial-story propaganda will do more harm in the long run to the Church than anything else I could imagine; just as the constant repetition of propaganda from Moscow in Walter Duranty's dispatches has propagated Communism in this country beyond any Communist speaker and writer.

## The Church in Russia Today

DOM MATEMUS, O.S.B.

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THE eyes of the civilized world are daily turned to the Union of the Socialistic and atheistic Soviet Republic of Russia, where an anti-God war has been carried on for some years under the leadership of Communists, Red Socialists, and the yellow press. All the efforts of Pope Benedict XV and Pius XI, the conferences of Geneva and the League of Nations, to alleviate the sufferers and to obtain respect for conscience, freedom of religious worship and guarantees to safeguard church property, have so far not prevailed. On the contrary, the "Militant No-God League," formed in 1929, has issued new declarations of war against any and every religion in Russia.

When, on March 15, 1917, Czar Nicholas signed his resignation as Emperor of Russia, the Bolsheviks assumed the administration of the Soviet Republic and the term "Holy Russia" ended. Today the Union of the Socialistic Soviet

Republic of Russia extends from the northern Arctic to the steppes of Turkestan, covering an area of 21,353,100 square miles with a population of 147,000,000, composed of 195 different races. Religious statistics are unavailable with a few exceptions. The Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod, the Metropolitans with 200 bishops and 17,000 Orthodox priests are more or less the only statistics available. The Jews are represented by 2,500,000, whilst the Catholic Church has the Archbishop of Mohilev, four bishops of Kamenez, Minsk, Tiraspol-Saratov, Schitomir, by an administrator for Armenia and the Vicar-Apostolic of Siberia with a round of 550 parishes. Protestantism is represented by two bishops of the Lutheran-Evangelical Church.

The Bolshevik Soviets is a disciplined organization which claims absolute dominion over religion and morals, education, culture. In order to obtain their end, religious foundations must first of all be undermined and destroyed. It may therefore be of some interest to many to hear something about the Catholic Church in Russia.

A small portion of the mighty country was converted to Christianity as far back as the fourth century; but the small body of Christians was, so to say, drowned in the stream of migration of nations, or was absorbed by the conflicting heresies of the fourth and fifth centuries. It was only in the ninth century that we hear again of the evangelization of Russia by St. Cyril and St. Methodius, the Apostles of the Slavs, who were sent by the holy Patriarch Ignatius of Constantinople to teach the Christian faith to the Khasar tribes, that in their turn effected the conversion of other tribes. After the death of St. Cyril in 869, Methodius is said to have penetrated into Muscovy proper, and to have established the Episcopal See of Kiev. The bulk of the Russian nation, however, remained buried in paganism till near a century later, when Queen Olga, wife of Igor, prepared the way for Christianity after she had been baptized at Constantinople by the holy Patriarch Polyeuct. It was, however, only under her grandson, the Grand Duke Wladimir (981-1015), that the Catholic Church was finally established in the Russian Empire in 988, with Kiev as the Metropolis.

From these few historical facts it is clear that the Rus-

sian Church did not receive her faith from the schismatical Greek Church of Constantinople or that she was never in union with Rome. To prove this beyond question there is the historical fact that the Grand Duke Demitrius sent his ambassadors to Rome to place his kingdom under the protection of the Holy See, with the avowed intention to separate Kiev from Constantinople, which, since 1054, had fallen into schism. Yet the Tartar invaders (1244-1480) removed the Metropolitan See from Kiev to Moscow, and all the endeavors of Popes Alexander III and Innocent III to reunite Russia with Rome failed, and the schism lasted from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. It was only Isidor, "metropolitan of Kiev and of all Russia, who succeeded in effecting this union at Florence in 1438-39, and with eight Ruthenian bishops made his submission to Rome, a union which lasted till 1520. When Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks (1453), the power and prestige of the Byzantine Patriarch were weakened, and the Czars made use of the opportunity to free the Russian Church from all foreign dependence, and subjected the primates of Moscow to themselves. Czar Feodor I erected in 1589 the Russian Patriarchate of Moscow, till Peter the Great, the "Guardian of Orthodoxy" replaced the Patriarchate of Russia by the "Holy Synod," and dragged the Russian Church into a net of complete subjection to the State by the Ukase of January 21, 1721.

Catherine II and Paul I completed the work by publishing further Ukases for the subjection or extinction of the Uniat Ruthenians and Catholic Poles. Truth-loving men, however, full of zeal for the salvation of souls as well as for the salvation of their nation, were also to be found within the Ruthenian Church, who finally brought the cherished scheme of reunion to a happy close at the Synod of Brest on October 6, 1596, the conditions of which had already been confirmed by Pope Clement VIII in 1595 and sealed with the blood of St. Josaphat Kunzewitsch, the martyr-Archbishop of Poloztk (1580-1623). The Uniat Ruthenian Church soon reached the number of 12,000,000 Catholics scattered over 13,000 parishes, 17,000 churches, and 251 monasteries.

Some of these Uniat Ruthenians came in close contact with the Catholic Poles and adopted the Latin Rite, while

millions kept the Slav Liturgy. When finally in 1772, 1792 and 1795 Catholic Poland with all her dependencies was annexed by Russia, Catherine II solemnly promised full religious liberty to both Catholic Poles and Ruthenians; but the promises were not kept. Scarcely had the treaties been signed, when by one stroke of the pen, 1,200 churches were abolished between 1794-1796, and 1,572,000 Catholic Ruthenians were forced into the fold of the Russian Church.

By the year 1825 there were only 1,398,478 Ruthenian Catholics left; but Czar Nicholas I (1825-55) found this number still too alarming for the safety of the Russian Orthodox Church. Finally the Ruthenian Uniat Church was dissolved; separation from Rome was proclaimed, and registration for the Orthodox Russian Church was made obligatory by February 24, 1839. Czar Nicholas II (1855-1881) sealed the ruin of the Ruthenians, and thus ended the Uniat Ruthenian Church in Russia after a struggle of over one hundred years (1723-1874), when not less than 12,000,000 Catholic Ruthenians had been cut off from the union of the Mother Church of Rome by the sword of persecution. Yet in spite of persecution the Ruthenian Church is in Russia today, notwithstanding the hostile attitude of the Russian Bolsheviks.

After Czar Nicholas II had signed his resignation as Emperor of Russia on March 15, 1917, the Bolsheviks assumed the administration of the newly-formed Soviet Republic, and strongly supported by the Communists, Socialists, Freemasons and Jews, turned "Holy Russia" into a godless State. Of the 147,000,000 inhabitants of modern Russia, composed of 195 different races, and scattered over seven independent Russian Republics, 10,000,000 only have a vote, while the organization and administration are in the hands of 150,000 members, who constitute the Tcheka or G. P. U., formed by P. E. Dzerzhewski in 1917. In order to obtain Soviet ends the religious foundations of mankind must first of all be undermined and destroyed. By an edict of January 23, 1918, separation of Church and State was proclaimed, and free exercise of religion without let and hindrance was granted. Yet by a new regulation of February 23, 1922, all church property was confiscated, religious instruction and public religious services were forbidden on the plea "that religion was opium for the people."

"As far as religion is concerned the Communistic party of the Soviet Union has nothing further to add. All the rules and regulations already decreed and approved concerning State and Church remain in full force. They hope that by these means religion and religious convictions will die a natural death without any further legislation." This statement was made by one of the Soviet leaders to Mr. Benesch, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, in 1935, on the occasion of his visit to Russia. On June 21, 1935, Stalin, the Dictator of Soviet Russia, wrote: "The Communist party of Russia cannot remain neutral as far as religion is concerned. Hence the action and policy of Bolshevism are still a war of annihilation against the Church absolute and without any compromise."

On the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution there were in Russia, 50,000 priests and some 70,000 churches and places of worship; today there are only a few places of worship in existence; the rest have either been desecrated, blown up, or pulled down. In the former Russian Orthodox Church there were in 1925 only 300 priests, of the Catholics only thirty-two, while the Protestants had only fourteen pastors. The remainder, together with the religious monks and Sisters, were murdered in cold blood or exiled, detained in prisons or compulsory camps, exposed to all manner of filthy ill treatment by human beings, more ferocious than the beasts of the field. Yet the world at large, and especially some countries of the world, for the sake of trade, fraternize with the leaders of the Soviet Union.

Of the 44,000 clergy of the Orthodox Russian Church only a few hundred are left, while others are detained in concentration camps or prisons, condemned to hard work. German Catholics to the number of 500,000, who had emigrated to Russia and settled there, and had been under the jurisdiction of their own bishops and well supplied with German-speaking priests, are today reduced to ten parishes. They are still able to practice their religion, but have to assemble in private houses, while 1,000,000 German Protestant settlers are looked after by nine pastors. To provide these settlers with priests or pastors is absolutely impossible, for the volunteer candidates would either be imprisoned or exiled, condemned to hard labor or put into the Soviet army. The city of Moscow, which, previous to the Revolution, had

600 churches—among them the Salvator Cathedral, one of the largest and richest in the whole of Russia—has been reduced today to twenty-eight; the remainder have either been blown up by dynamite, pulled down, or turned into clubs, museums, factories, dancing halls or granaries. The same sad story of vandalism can be witnessed at Leningrad, the former St. Petersburg, at Nizhni-Novgorod, Saratov, Rostov, Kiev and Odessa. The Soviet Congress Hall is the storage of confiscated church property such as chasubles, chalices, statues, which were bought by American Jews.

In order to crush religion altogether the Soviet leaders are making every effort to corrupt the rising generation by a concerted war against Sunday observance. Every sixth day is a day of rest in order that the people may forget Sunday altogether. The militant No-God League is carrying on an active propaganda throughout the world, as was pointed out by the Orthodox Archbishop Seraphim of Charkov, at the Catholic Congress held in Vienna in 1931.

The world has been and still is deceived by Soviets, diplomats and politicians who paint in vivid colors the prosperity, success, the happiness and contentment of the Russians under the Soviet government, yet deceitfully hide the religious, moral, cultural, economic, social and intellectual decadence of modern Russia, the profanation and ruination of the sanctuaries of God, of home and family life, the reduction of a nation of 147,000,000 to enforced slavery of men, women and children. Soviet Russia is not more or less at this writing than a nightmare of horrors.

# Birth Control, a Moral Cancer

J. A. HIGGINS, S.M.

*Radio broadcast from St. Mary's, Wellington, N. Z., May 2, 1937.*

*Blessed art thou among women: and blessed is the  
fruit of thy womb.*

THESE words were spoken to Mary, by St. Elizabeth, her cousin, when "inspired by the Holy Ghost," she saluted her as the Mother of God. In this fact that when God set about the salvation of the human race He chose to be born of a woman there is a remarkable significance for our modern world. Today among the masses, maternity has lost its high and holy dignity, the sense of its remarkable worth is almost gone. The modern world regards motherhood almost as a calamity which now and again happens to women who have not been "fortunate" enough to avoid bearing a child. For all that the most highly honored creature of the Most High God is so honored because she is a Mother, the Mother of God to be sure, yet the meaning of this most eloquent fact of history is lost upon the people of our day.

Today there is even a fear of life among men: not that men fear to live, or that women fear to carry out the years of their allotted span, but that men and women fear to give life to sons and daughters. And this fear is, on the very face of Christian fact, contrary to the life of Christ. There was no need for God to be born into this world, no need for Him to have a mother. He could have done His divine work of our redemption without His Mother—but He chose to have a mother, to be born of a woman. It is incredible that in thus choosing, Our Saviour did not wish to teach us the true meaning of motherhood and of parenthood. In blessing His own Mother by becoming her Son, God blessed also maternity itself, and blessed forever the women who are the mothers of our race. We may well enquire, then, whether the people of our day realize the Christian meaning of maternity—for the unspeakable fact is that today an increasing number of Christians evidently does not value maternity as of much worth.



Under the name of birth control, human parenthood, so clearly blessed by God in His holy Mother, is despised, rejected as something which people must always avoid. The issue is that people think that for one reason or another children are not desirable. This means that people decide that our race, that human life itself is not worth while. The greed and selfishness of modern times have so eaten into the people that they are refusing to propagate their kind. What counts is not so much that people do not bear children as why they do not. For as it is clear that people are free to marry or not, so is it clear that a married couple are free to have a family or not—provided that they honor the law of God. To assert that this freedom is an absurd misnomer because the choice of this freedom means that married people are forced to practise self-control and self-restraint, even, perhaps, to the extent of abstaining from marital congress, is only to declare that it is absurd to expect married people to practise self-control.

In order to avoid both parenthood and self-control people today practise artificial birth-control. This is wrong in principle because it is in practise the denial that men and women in the affairs of married life are obliged to live by the law of God; it is the denial that married people are obliged to live by the law of the Incarnation, by the law of the Divine Son of Mary. Notice that we say that artificial birth-control is wrong in principle. There can therefore be no question of allowing it in certain circumstances and not in others, because circumstances do not make it right or wrong in principle. Should there be any doubt regarding the wrong of artificial birth-control in principle, let those who doubt realize that the very practise is in itself the confession that people know that God meant the birth of children to be the result of the association of man and wife which birth-control renders abortive. The very practise of birth-control is the admission that if nature is left to her own course children will be born: and the course of nature is the law of God.

— Birth control is, therefore, a practical admission that people deliberately frustrate or defeat the law of God. On what ground can anyone claim the right deliberately to frustrate the law of God? The answer is plain: no authority exists. Revelation and Christian teaching are dead against it, and no authority of man or woman, no authority of medi-

cal profession, no authority of government or of nation, no authority whatsoever exists to permit people to interfere with the law of God. Therefore the Catholic Church says: I did not make this law. God made this law of life and over this law I have no authority except the authority, the sacred mandate to promulgate the laws of God, and in God's own words to pronounce flagitious what God Himself has called "detestable." Those who practise artificial birth-control confess by their conduct that such is the law, that child-bearing as determined by God can be controlled only by the way of continence.

All the arguments used in favor of birth-control are arguments of expediency and of convenience; they are not arguments of principle. For example, the plea is made that a couple cannot afford to have children. That actually may be the fact, but the fact that they cannot afford to have a family gives them no right to break the law of God. Pushed to its logical extreme this economic argument would allow a couple to argue that had they made a mistake, economically, in having a child they would have the right to get rid of their offspring. But that idea is loathsome and abhorrent; so is birth-control.

To argue that a couple should be able to afford a family is a very different matter; and here Christian teaching is with the married people who desire to have children. It is very seriously part of the function of a Government so to rule that people can afford to have families. But let this be noted—birth-control is practised by those who can well afford to have a family. But perhaps the deadly evil of birth-control can be most clearly seen in the effects of the practice. If there is any truth in the test given by Holy Scripture, "By their fruits you shall know them," birth-control is evil beyond words. Among the results of birth-control we may point to the fact that self-indulgence by both sexes is practised to a disgusting degree with consequent degradation for both men and women. As indulgence in drink degrades so does unreasonable conduct in marital relationship.

Then birth-control creates a dearth of self-control which leads to selfishness which, in turn, breeds discontent and disloyalty to duty. Birth-control is an efficient cause of modern divorce and of the refusal of married people to honor their obligations, their duties towards each other and

towards their children, if they have any. Moreover, birth-control leads to widespread immorality among unmarried people who have learnt that they can with impunity engage in sexual indulgence.

As there can be no shadow of doubt that the natural law for human beings is the normal law of their lives, there can be no shadow of doubt that birth-control is unnatural and abnormal and brings with it for both man and woman disorders of health, both nervous and physical. Another serious aspect is that birth-control means the suicide of the race, and it is only a matter of time when the fertile races of the earth will control, will subjugate and rule the sterile nations who will not keep the fundamental laws of life.

In spite of these and other obvious evil results of artificial birth-control, the plea is still made that child-bearing means so much stress and strain and even bodily anguish that it is unreasonable to expect some women, at least, to bear children. A further plea is made that parenthood involves for both father and mother responsibilities and sorrows and burdens. So be it. And let this be said: no woman is bound to marry—and no man. But their freedom lies radically in their first refusal to have nothing to do with what is necessary for the birth of children. If by her own choice a woman desires to live a married life, she has no sort of right to break the law of God for her own convenience—and this is true of the man who marries freely. Married women certainly have the right to demand reasonable conduct and treatment from their husbands who have the obligation under the law of God, to exert that self-restraint which reason demands.

But when all this is said there remains the cold hard fact that even with sound and healthy conditions of home and family life the responsibility of parents in regard to their children is fraught with the danger of anguish and of woe. The natural love of parent for child is the source of sorrow because life never works perfectly, and a degree of sadness and anxiety is the common lot of both father and mother. Yet is not this itself a deep law of life? And how can any Christian conceivably use the fact that children bring with them obligations and anxieties to justify the practice of artificial birth-control? If the example of Christ and His own holy Mother is any lesson at all, that lesson is that parent-

hood, and particularly maternity, is bound up in the very law of our redemption with the sacrifice that parents are called to make for their children.

Mary was the Mother of God, the Mother of the Second Person of the Most Adorable Trinity and she was also the most sorrowful Mother our human race has known. That there was joy most radiant for Mary because of her Divine Son, we cannot doubt: but we know also that there was a sevenfold sword of sorrow that pierced her soul. She, the Mother of God, is Our Lady of Bethlehem and of Nazareth, but she is also the valiant Mother of God who stood on Calvary's hill there to see her Divine Child die crucified between two thieves. Pain ran through the lives of Jesus and of His Mother like a scarlet stream. On the plea of escaping sorrow and anguish do people today refuse the duties of parents? That would not be evil except that while they refuse duty because they fear suffering, they do not hesitate to break the law of God for their own self-indulgence. For a Christian people the issue is plain beyond words: the law of God must first be served. God has not robbed us of all choice, of all freedom, but under pain of fearful calamity, He warns us that our liberty must be used only in keeping with His law.

Long years ago the voice of the Catholic Church alone was raised against birth-control and its sister sin, the murder of the unborn child. Then the Church was sneered at and laughed at in mockery. Today the peoples of our civilization are at their wits' end to know how to save themselves from the slow death of birth-control. From that death there is no salvation unless the people accept the law of God, unless they do what the Catholic Church has insisted is vitally necessary for all men, unless they follow the example of the Babe of Bethlehem and of His holy Mother, and—first and foremost—in life be loyal to the fundamental laws which God has made for men. Today the nations are awake to the danger that lies in birth-control. That danger is the outcome of the practical denial of God in the deep laws of life. The only hope for the future lies in the people confessing their God in the very practical matters of their lives—for none but a people who confess God and obey His laws because they are the laws of God will ever save themselves from the terrible ravages of artificial birth-control.